

FIRST STEP: ANSWER THE QUESTION “WHY?”

You might have already discovered that not everybody is as gung-ho on Pathfindering as you are. This can be especially true if a club has had difficulty in the past. Some common objections to launching a Pathfinder ministry include:

- We have no place to meet.
- We do not have enough children for a club.
- We do not have adequate leadership.
- It costs too much!
- We’ve tried a club here before, but it never got “off the ground”.
- There isn’t enough interest in having a club now.

Objections could come from church leaders, parents, the pastor, church members, or even prospective Pathfinders—the kids themselves. Some churches are anxious to start a new club but may not be sure why they should have one. Other groups might be more skeptical, or even resistant. It’s vital to have a support base—people who are willing to develop a strong Pathfinder ministry—before a club is “launched”. So be prepared to answer the “why should we” questions early in the development process. Answer them first in your own mind, for your conviction will be a powerful tool for selling the idea of a club to others. Let’s look at some reasons for Pathfindering which can be helpful in answering the “why” questions. Then we’ll look at a process for dealing with objections that might occur.

Reason #1: Pathfindering is Historically Successful

For 40-plus years now Pathfindering has been a worldwide emphasis that has helped to win untold thousands of children to Jesus and a commitment to the church. Pathfindering knows no cultural, racial, or national boundaries. It is equally effective in large or small churches, rural or urban, with boys and girls.

Pathfinding has not only helped to cement young lives to the Lord and His church; it has also galvanized a large army of adult workers—workers who give unlimited time, money, and hard work in service to their church. Pathfinding is multi-generational. The elderly and the young enjoy activities together. Parents and children find in Pathfinding unique opportunities for family togetherness. Single adults find in Pathfinding a fulfilling ministry. Pathfinding provides opportunities for all family/household configurations to work together. It is a ministry that involves children from other religious persuasions, whether Christian or non-Christian. Students unable to attend Seventh-day Adventist schools can find in Pathfinding a “bonding” with those who do. Parents whose spouses are not of the same faith find in Pathfinding “acceptable” church-related activities for their children. The historical evidence is in—Pathfinding worldwide is a proven heaven-inspired treasure, given uniquely to the Seventh-day Adventist church, with a success record that is clear. Why Pathfinding? Because it has been so successful for so long!

Reason #2: Pathfinding Provides A Unique FUN Experience

Kids want and need to have fun. The church can offer fun in many ways: Sabbath activities, recreation, summer camping, etc. But for many churches—especially smaller, rural ones—Pathfinding can offer fun in a unique way that is not possible otherwise. This is especially true if there is no church school present.

Consider this “Fun-Formula”, critical ingredients for children to have fun in a Biblical way:

F=FRIENDS. Children have the most fun when they can be with friends. Pathfinders gives boys and girls, especially those from lonely or isolated homes, many opportunities to make and to be with friends.

U=UNDERSTANDING ADULTS. Left to themselves, boys and

girls have fun for awhile. Lasting fun comes when understanding adults are available to coach, to refer differences, to provide support, supplies, and suggestions. In Pathfinders children can come in contact with adults who especially care for them, who have skills and sensitivity, who often can provide a type of adult understanding lacking in many homes today.

N=NEW EXPERIENCES. Through Pathfinding boys and girls can experience activities, adventure, and achievement not otherwise available to them, travel to large camporees and fairs—sometimes out of state, field trips, outdoor events, and learning some of the more than 250 honors. Pathfinding offers a staggering number of options for any youngster, rural or urban.

It is only Pathfinding that in any church can provide this threefold “recipe” for fun: Friends, Understanding Adults and New Experiences. If a church wants to provide wholesome, Biblical fun for its boys and girls, only Pathfinding can fill the bill.

Reason #3: Because Pathfinding Is the Right Philosophy

The *Pathfinder Staff Manual* outlines a Pathfinding philosophy. At least 13 reasons can be found why the Pathfinder ministry is important. Notice just a few:

1. Spiritual benefits
2. Formation of right thought patterns
3. Alternate activities to the distracting influences in a secular world
4. Development of skills and physical fitness
5. Development of lifestyle interests that can provide for a richer, fuller, adult experience
6. Involvement with nature and the out-of-doors
7. Assimilation of Scripture
8. Learning new ideas, things, and skills through honors study
9. Group-leadership development and learning how to make right decisions

Mentally, socially, physically, spiritually—Pathfinding has a philosophy that is “right”. It is built on sound principles. Summarize some of these benefits for yourself. Keep them on a handy reference card, just in case you are asked why Pathfinding is really important.

Reason #4. Pathfinding Provides A “Laboratory” Experience

Recognized Pathfinding expert, Elder Norman O. Middag, in his leadership training reminds adults that Pathfinding is a “laboratory,” a hands on program, an extension of the home, school, and church, an experimental laboratory where growth and learning flourish, an environment where failure is not expected but becomes a tool for learning. As parents and other adults work with Pathfinders, a special bonding can take place. It is in this inter-relational “lab” that Biblical principles are “caught” as well as taught to boys and girls. The Pathfinder Club becomes a unique educational laboratory for the home, the school, and the church. These four reasons can help to answer the “Why should we” questions that might come to you as you seek to start a Pathfinder Club. It is best if you develop your own answers so you can give a ringing testimony, spoken with sincere conviction to those who might oppose the establishment of a club.

Suggested Methods for Answering the “Why” Questions

Questions may come, and be answered, in the context of:

- Personal conversations
- Group assemblies (Sabbath services, Home & School, etc.)
- Formal visits in the office or home
- Classroom visits
- Church Boards/Committees

Here are some presentation methods that might help:

Testimonials:

Invite another Pathfinder, a parent, or a staff member from another club to tell why Pathfinding is special to him/her.

Videos:

Prepare video reports of a neighboring club, conference events, or interviews to use as a “promo” tool.

Prospectus:

Develop a notebook, showing a Pathfinder insignia, photos of local club and conference activities, achievement awards, and other items which illustrate the advantages of Pathfinding.

Slide Program:

Like the video, prepare visual reports of key aspects of Pathfinding.

Displays:

Prepare posters, photos, sample honor projects, trophies or other awards earned, sample uniform, etc., to be placed in a church or school foyer. Include descriptive/informative brochures.

Personal Letter:

To be distributed to parents and prospective Pathfinders which answer the “why” questions for a club in your area.

Pathfinder Brochure:

This brochure defines what Pathfinding is and what it offers. It is filled with pictures and gives valuable quotes for Pathfinders, parents, and club leadership.

Adapt your methods to your needs. If it is necessary to build a lot of support for the establishment of a Pathfinder Club, use a variety of “tools”. Sometimes a few prepared answers is sufficient. In other situations a full-scale “marketing” approach may be needed. It is important to remember that the question “Why is this important for us at this time?” must be adequately